



Al-Risala 1990

April

2 April 1990

The Difference in Thinking

The difference between you and me is only one of hearing, where you hear a door close, I hear it open.

The English poet Frederick Langbridge (1849-1923) certainly gave us food for thought when he penned the following couplet:

Two men look out through the same bars

One sees the mud and one the stars.

This same point was made – rather more effectively – by a Persian poet who said; “The difference between you and me is only one of hearing. Where you hear a door close, I hear it open.”

There is no rose without thorns, but one who broods on the existence of thorns without giving any thought to the beauty of the roses above them is like the man who looks at mud in preference to the stars. Social conditions are always a combination of roses and thorns, mud and stars; and it is only the wise man who knows how much importance to give to each. The man who concentrates solely on thorns and mud will be the man who can only hear doors closing and never hear them opening.

Most social problems are problems of the mind. They are almost always capable of being solved by changes of attitude and ways of thinking. It is a question of inculcating right ways of thinking at the appropriate stage in a man’s spiritual development. Only then will he be a worthy, positive, social being.

2 April 1990

Willingness to give others pride of place

When 'Umar Ibn Khattab lay dying, he asked his son 'Abdullah to go and see 'Aishah. "Greet her and tell her that 'Umer Ibn Khattab asks for permission to be buried next to his master. Be sure not to call me Commander of the Faithful, for today I am no longer in that position." 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar went to see 'Aishah, and found her seated, crying. He greeted her and gave her his father's message. "You know," 'Aishah replied. "I was reserving that place for myself, but today I will certainly give 'Umar precedence over myself."

(Ibn Sa'ad)

Miracle of the Quran

The Quran is a book with a message. Whoever is inspired by its scriptures, whoever reads and believes, is immediately transformed into a *da'i*. As he reads, his heart and mind become the heart and mind of a bearer of God's message. He becomes imbued with the feeling that it is his duty to convey to all mankind the eternal truths which he has discovered through the Book of God.

The literacy rate among the Arabs was so low that when the prophet sent a letter to Juwasa, in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, inviting the people to Islam not a single literate person could be found to read out the letter. It was only after a long search that the inhabitants found a youth who could oblige them. It was during this time that Annamir ibn Tawlab, a chief of the tribe, converted. He was such a great poet that a collection of his works has been published. Yet, when the Prophet appointed him an official chief of his tribe, and gave him instructions in writing, he (Annamir) could not read them himself. (In those days, people , relied solely on their memory, and felt no need to put anything on paper.) So he was obliged to come into the market place and ask if there was anyone who knew how to read, so that the letter could be read out to him.

At the time of the Prophet, there were actually only a few dozen people in Mecca who could read and write. In Medina, the percentage was even lower. But, astonishingly enough, by the second century of hijrah, the Arabic language became, from the academic point of view, the most developed language in the world. The period of language development in the case of Arabic is so short that it has no precedence in the history, either ancient or modern of the entire world.

What is the explanation for the rapidity of this academic and linguistic development among the Arabs? The only way that we can explain this incredible happening is to say that it was the direct miracle of the Quran.

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This intense feeling inspires him to learn the language of the people and all the other things that one must know about them, if the task of bringing the truth to them is to be effectively carried out. This means that he must fortify himself academically and intellectually. If he himself was formerly illiterate, he must now educate himself in order to achieve his goal. *Da'wah*, by its very nature, makes the individual it affects a man of knowledge, a man of awareness. Ignorance and unawareness are anathema to the vibrant spirit of *da'wah*.

4 April 1990

The Prophet and his companions

Certain bearers of gifts to Abu Dhar Ghefari, failing to find him in Rabdhah, because he had gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca, went on to meet him at Mina, and happened actually to be in his presence when he was told that Uthman ibn Affan, who was the caliph of the Muslims at the time, had prayed four rak'ats in Mina; he had not shortened his prayer, as one normally does on a journey. This upset Abu Dharr, and he had some harsh words to say. "How does Uthman pray four rak'ats," he wondered, "When I myself have prayed two rak'ats with the prophet, with Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, and with Umar, the second Caliph." Then Abu Dhar arose, and prayed four rak'ats himself. People were puzzled at his doing the very thing for which he had criticized the Commander of the Faithful, and asked the reason. "Causing conflict is a grave matter," he explained.

4 April 1990

How a believer should treat others

Ali said of the Prophet: "He himself shunned three things: quarrels, pride and idleness. And three things he refrained from inflicting upon others: he did not belittle anyone, did not lay blame on anyone; nor did he dwell on anybody's weaknesses."

(Tirmidhi)

The Treasure House of Power

If a computer to match the brain's potential was built, it would occupy space comparable to the size of the Empire State Building (1,250 feet tall). The mind is one of God's most amazing gifts to man. Yet most people use only a small fraction of their mental ability. For many, the power remains largely untapped.

In an article on human brain, *The Plain Truth* (October 1988) writes: "The brain is a fabulous mechanism. About the size of half a grapefruit, it can record 800 memories a second for the average 75 years many of us live, without exhausting itself. The human brain retains everything it takes in and never forgets anything. Even though we don't recall all the information received, everything is on permanent file in our brain. If a computer to match the brain's potential was built, it would occupy space comparable to the size of the Empire State Building (1,250 feet tall) and need, 1,000,000,000 watts of electrical power to run. The cost would be equally immense. The mind is one of God's most amazing gifts to man. Yet most people use only a small fraction of their mental ability. For many, the power remains largely untapped."

Another article, 'Our Wondrous Brain,' published in the American magazine *Span* (September 1989) and edited by William F. Allman, Senior Editor of *U.S. News and World Report*, tells us that research work on the brain has been so stepped up that the recent increase in information on the brain has been like an explosion. In fact, a whole new branch of Science – Brain Science – has now come into existence.

Our Scientist has called the brain an 'engine of thought.' But this term is quite inadequate, for the functioning in unison of the 100,000 million neurons of the brain, with all its capacity for instant differentiation, far surpasses that of any potential machine, no matter how great its capabilities. In fact, according to the article in *Span*, "An explosion of recent findings in brain science – aided by new computer programs that can simulate brain cells in action – is now revealing that the brain is far more intricate than any mechanical device imaginable." (p 24)

Truth, Not Hypothesis

Prior to the Prophet of Islam, there had been no practical, historical backing for religious teaching. But, through him and his companions, for the first time in history, the high teachings of religion were not allowed to remain mere abstractions. A complete, true history came into existence which left no stone unturned. The truth is that each and every word that is used to express the greatness of the Prophet denotes an established faith, and does not stem from a subjective, unsubstantiated faith resting on mere hypothesis.

In the Quran, the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, has been called the last of the Prophets (Armies, 40). This does not simply mean that he was the final link in the long chain of Prophethood. It means that God's purpose in sending His messengers was completely fulfilled when He sent the Prophet Muhammed, may peace be upon him. There was, therefore, no further need to send another Prophet after him.

This final fulfilment of God's purpose through the Prophet of Islam is not just a matter of personal belief. It is a known historical fact. That is why the historian, Thomas Carlyle, called him as the greatest of all Prophets, American Professor Michael Hart has called him the greatest man of history.

All of the Prophets, without exception, brought the message of monotheism. Before the advent of Islam, the message of monotheism had remained in the *da'wah* stage. It was all part of the spiritual struggle, but had not reached the stage of revolution. The Prophet of Islam, aided by his companions in spreading the message, finally made revolution a reality.

Before the coming of the Prophet of Islam, God's religion had been distorted and diluted. From the time of Noah to that of the Messiah, there was no religion that had been spared the manipulations of human beings. With the coming of the Prophet, however, God's religion was cleansed – for the first time in human history – of all such adulteration, and steps were taken to preserve religion in its true form for all time to come.

Before the Prophet of Islam, religion remained a matter of controversy. At that juncture in history, there was still not that accumulation of facts in its favour which could have given it an unassailable position. This was the great feat performed by the Prophet: he successfully led religion out of the age of controversy and into the age of established Prophethood.

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7 April 1990

A sense of responsibility, not greed for power, makes one fit to lead

When Abu Bakr was elected Caliph, he addressed the people. "By God," he said, "I never had any greed or desire for power. Never, either secretly or openly, have I asked God for it. I have only taken it on for fear of friction; despite the fact that there will be no comfort for me in the caliphate. I have put a yoke on my neck which it is beyond my strength to carry; it is only trusting in God's strength that I carry it. I would prefer anyone of you who is more fit than me for the task, to take it on."

(Baihaqi, Hakim)

7 April 1990

One who has no hate in his heart will enter heaven

The Prophet was sitting with some companions one day. "There is a person coming here down from the mountains who is one of the companions, of paradise." the Prophet said. The companions immediately saw someone appearing on that path. They greeted him, and told him that the Prophet had described him as one of the companions of paradise. "What do you do that is so special?" they asked. "Nothing in particular," he replied. "All I can say is that I hold no rancour in my heart towards any Muslim."

Challenge, Not Danger

A reader of Al-Risala writes: "During a train journey I met a Hindu doctor who said that whenever non-Muslims alleged that Islam had been spread by the sword, Muslims became enraged and retorted that it had spread on the strength of its truth.

He noted that while they were quick to make this assertion, they did not appear to do so with total conviction. Otherwise why keep proclaiming that Islam was "in danger" at the slightest sign of any threat to its integrity?"

What the Hindu meant was that if the power of Islam did indeed rest on the fact of its being a true religion, it could not ever be said to be "in danger." Its innate strength should be armour enough. The frequent raising of a hue and cry by Muslims that their religion is under threat would appear to indicate, that Islam is actually obliged to fall back on the sword in order to perpetuate its existence. There is the insidious suggestion that if, today, the power of the sword has been taken away from Islam, Islam is then really in danger. But since Islam's real power is truth there is no question of its being in jeopardy. If a man once possesses the truth, it will remain with him for ever. Truth is not something which can be usurped. Especially not by the sword.

Islam must be seen as an ideology. As such, it would be under threat only if it were proved wrong ideologically. But Islam has never been proved wrong on such grounds, having maintained the truth of its ideology right throughout its history. Islam, therefore is in no peril.

It will, however, continue to be faced with challenges, as it was in the past, and it will continue to meet them as it did the challenge of Greek thought during the period of the Abbasids – to quote but one example.

At that time no one raised the slogan: "Islam is in danger." Whatever challenge there was, was met on an academic level. In the present age too, Islam has been faced with challenges which are purely ideological. But the Muslims of the present age have not shown themselves competent to answer modern challenges. That is why they resort to raising the slogan of Islam being in danger. What is really under threat is Muslim leadership, and Muslim leaders, in order to save their leadership began saying that Islam was in danger.

Without Prior Notice

Just consider what a terrible event an earthquake is. And it comes without notice. This is what makes it so terrible. The same goes for death. It comes suddenly, without notice – the ultimate personal earthquake. Whether man wants to or not, he has to face death. He has to bow his head before its verdict.

The most subtle aspect of death is that it is not the end. It is the beginning of a new life – a life at the outset of which man has to be judged in the Divine Court of Justice to decide hellfire. It is this aspect of death which makes it a matter of immeasurable seriousness.

Mohammad Ismail of Bombay has an interesting account to give us of an incident which took place while he was travelling through the U.S.A. and Canada with a group (Jama'at) of Tablighi devotees. (The Tabligh movement entails travelling for the purpose of conveying the divine message to people far and wide.) In March, 1989, when this group was visiting a city in Canada, they went to call on a Muslim doctor. Far from being pleased to see these 'bearded' men, he burst out angrily, "How have you come here without informing me beforehand?" As it happened, the group also included a doctor. After introducing himself, he said, "We have come to you without prior notice to tell you that a 'man' will come to you one day without prior notice."

This is by far the most important piece of news that anyone can receive. It is, in fact, a warning, and it is essential that all men should receive it before it is too late, for when the "man" comes, it will be with great suddenness; Even those who, to all intents and purposes, are already aware of this, and appear to believe in it as an eventuality, require to be alerted to it, as they too have yet to grasp this reality in its fullest sense.

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The most subtle aspect of death is that it is not the end. It is the beginning of a new life – a life at the outset of which man has to be judged in the Divine Court of Justice to decide whether he will be sent to eternal paradise or to eternal hellfire. It is this aspect of death which makes it a matter of immeasurable seriousness.

10 April 1990

Mechanical Aid

In American society, a large number of old people have no one to live with them, so they live all alone. It often happens that an elderly person falls victim to an accident and requires immediate help, but has no helper nearby. For such old people, the American police department has arranged a system called the 'Telephone-dialing computer service.'

This computer service automatically checks up on older people who live alone. At the same time every day, the computer calls them and says, "Good morning! Are you O.K." If the answer is "yes" the computer hangs up and goes on to the next number. If no one answers, the computer alters the police.

Developed by Bruce Johnson, a local computer hobbyist, the program saved the life of Clyde Ritter, 73, when he fell into a diabetic coma, and rescued another older resident, whose hands had become stuck in a window.

(*Time*, May 1, 1989)

10 April 1990

Following up a wrong with a right

'Umer said that the best way to deal with one who has disobeyed God with regard to you, is to obey God with regard to him.

(*Tafseer Ibn Kathir*)

The Voice of History

In India, anti-Muslim vengefulness cannot remain at its present level of intensity. When it reaches its culminating point, a period of regret and admission of guilt is bound to set in according to nature's own laws. Then it will become evident that it was those very people who were the enemies of Islam who have now become its friends.

The end of revenge is the beginning of regret. When revenge reaches its final limit, it turns into regret and admission of guilt. This is an eternal law of nature: history abounds in examples which bear witness to this.

One such instance, on the individual plane, is that of Umar ibn al-Khattab, who went on to become the second Caliph of Islam, but who started out in life as one of Islam's staunchest opponents. At that early point in his career, the conversion of his sister and brother-in-law was anathema to him, and the moment he came to know of it, he set off for their home in a towering rage. There he beat them so savagely that the blood began to flow. But then the sight of blood on his own sister's face suddenly cooled Umar's fury. Overwhelmed with regret, he asked his sister for a copy of Quran, which he then read from cover to cover. In this mood of regret, and thoroughly conscience-stricken, he felt touched to the heart by the Quran. Very soon after that, he hastened to the Prophet in order to accept Islam.

Another instance, on a communal level, is that of the Tartars. During the last period of the Abbasids, hordes of Tartar tribes came pouring out of the mountainous regions of Russia, bent on having their revenge on the Muslims. To settle their various grievances against them, they murdered tens of millions of Muslims all the way from Samarqand to Baghdad. They demolished the mosques and razed Muslim settlements to the ground. But when the Tartars had had their fill of revenge, their anger began to subside. Now the realization of their savagery began to prick their consciences and a feeling of regret began to set in. It was then that they felt drawn to Muslim beliefs and the Islamic way of life. This change of heart became so widespread that, ultimately, the majority of the Tartars accepted Islam.

In India, too, this piece of history is perhaps going to be repeated. Anti-Muslim vengefulness cannot remain at its present level of intensity. When it reaches its culminating point, a period of regret and admission of guilt is bound to set in according to nature's own laws. Then it will become evident that it was those very people who were the enemies of Islam who have now become its friends. The very intensity of non-Muslims' feelings of revenge shows that this time is almost upon them.

The denial of Islam is the denial of one's own self. And who is there on the face of this earth today who can afford such a denial?

12 April 1990

Rectifying others and being ready to be rectified oneself

When Abu Bakr was elected to be the first Caliph of Islam he addressed the people. "I have been put in charge of your affairs," he said, "though I am no better than you. I will consider the weakest of you as the strongest, as long as I have not ensured that he receives his rightful due. And the strongest that he receives his rightful due. And the strongest among you will to me be the weakest, as long as I have not ensured that he pays what he owes. People, I am just like anyone of you. If you see that I am pursuing a proper course, then follow me; and if you see me err, then set me straight."

12 April 1990

Justice for all

Muawiyah, the son of Abu Sufyan, asked Dharar to describe 'Ali. Part of Dhirar's description went like this. "He was like any one of us. No powerful person could have his way with him in pursuit of falsehood, and no weak soul had cause to despair of being treated justly by him."

Progress or Perish

There is no stagnation in life. A man will either rise or he will fall. There is implicit belief in the principle that if you do not make efforts to rise, you will surely, automatically, start going downwards.

In her 160-page book, *Japanese Society*, which was published in Tokyo in 1987, Chie Nakane, a professor of social anthropology at Tokyo University, introduces Japanese society and in considerable detail, describes the mental make-up of the Japanese. To her way of thinking, the Japanese are characterized by their "constant desire to rise a little higher than the average." (p. 155). To the author, this is a way of life for the Japanese. For them, it is like a religion, the basic tenets of which they are obliged to put into practice.

There is no stagnation in Japanese life. A man will either rise or he will fall. There is implicit belief in the principle that if you do not make efforts to rise, you will surely, automatically, start going downwards.

This principle is held to apply equally to the material and the spiritual life. The real believer is one whose faith is continuously on the increase. If this process of development is stopped, decadence will set-in in the believer's spiritual life. In such a world, maintaining the status quo (remaining in the same condition) is simply not possible.

What is true of Japan is true of the entire world. Man must always aim at progress, otherwise stagnation and decay will Set in both worldly and spiritual matters. Without such effort man could face ultimate annihilation and disappear altogether as a species.

14 April 1990

The Urdu Generation

After partition in 1947, the various departments were taken over by a generation who, besides having other good educational qualifications, were well-versed in Urdu. This included all the educated Hindus who migrated from Pakistan after partition. Right from Dr. Rajinder Prashad down, to the newspaper reporter, everyone was conversant with Urdu.

A good example of a well-educated Urdu-knowing journalist was veteran *Times of India* staff reporter Mohan Swaroop Mullick, who died just last year on March 25, 1989. He graduated in English from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and also obtained a diploma in Journalism from the Bombay College of Journalism. He was well-versed in English, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and German.

It was such versatile, Urdu-knowing people who were entrusted with the different offices in free-India. But Muslims failed to avail of this great asset until they were gradually replaced by Hindi and English-oriented officials who were quite ignorant of Urdu.

The greatest shortcoming of present-day Muslims is that they fail miserably to recognise opportunities. Besides this, they are always very aware of what they have lost, but are invariably unaware of what they still have – a very great potential. The grasping of opportunities and the development of potential are two things which seem inevitably to elude our present-day Muslims. These are the main reason for their lagging so far behind others in the world of today.

14 April 1990

Returning good for evil

'Ubadah Ibn Samit said that the Prophet offered to tell his companions something which would raise them in God's sight. When they asked him to do so, he said: "Be forbearing with those who behave foolishly with you; forgive those who oppress you; give to those who deprive you and consolidate ties with those who sever their relations with you."

The Verdict of Nature

Recent research in molecular biology has shown on the basis of genetic evidence, that the peoples of the entire world belong to one great family, all having come from a common ancestor.

If you ever travel to Canada from the United States, you will see that at the boundary line between these two countries, both of their flags are flying side by side. Near them is a board inscribed with the words: Children of a common mother.

What is expressly stated on a board set up on the borders of the United States and Canada is a truth which could very well be repeated at the borders of every country in the world, because that is a fact of nature now substantiated by modern science,

Recent research in molecular biology has shown, on the basis of genetic evidence, that the peoples of the entire world belong to one great family, all having come from a common ancestor. (For details, see *Ta'mir ki Taraf* by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, pp. 28-30)

That being so, we must heartily endorse what is inscribed on the board at the borders of the United States and Canada. Biological facts require that every nation now set up a similar board at its frontiers.

This is a test for man in the present world. Here man has to do the same of his own free will as has already been done, by nature in accordance with its own immutable laws. What nature has written in invisible form, man must write with his own hand on the pages of his life. To do this, man must mould his thinking and actions to bring them into line with Nature's great scheme of things.

Being in accordance with Nature's plan is a constructive approach: deviating from it spells destruction.

Which Way Do We Go?

A Moral Problem

According to *Plain Truth* of November-December, 1988, of all the weeklies published in the United States the one with the highest circulation is *Time* magazine. The number of letters received from its readers in the year 1987 has been put at 46,000, the gist of the opinions, they express being prepared with the help of computers.

These letters complain in general, of moral lapses such as greed, hypocrisy, the misuse of power, etc. The majority of the readers have no hopes for American society. Above all, they mourn a lack of direction.

Our secular, modern age does have some practical virtues. But, looked at in depth, it emerges as a conglomeration of societies all faced with ethical problems. Modern, secular society is propped up on a mechanical base. What would serve it better would be a moral base on which it could stand without fear.

This is not to say that secular society has struck ethics off its list of priorities. Secular and non-religious people too talk of ethical standards. But none of this talk bears fruit. The reason is that they think in terms of "ethics" alone, and not in terms of "sin". Once the concept of sin is taken away from the concept of ethics, moral sermons are left without force.

The most important aspect of the concept of sin is its inherent notion of accountability. It makes man fear, that if he abandons ethical standards, he will be taken to task by God. In this way, obedience to ethical standards is given a powerful incentive. One is thereby given a clear direction in which one can continue throughout life's journey. Devoid of this incentive, today's society is like a rudderless ship. Those who can offer this direction to the modern world will undoubtedly be its greatest benefactors.

Islamic Valour

The battle of Hattin (1187) is a landmark in Islamic history, for it was here in north Palestine, that Salahuddin Ayyubi emerged victorious over the crusaders, thanks to his extraordinary military strategy. At that time the Muslim army numbered 18,000. While the Christian army numbered 15,000. In this war, the crusaders had large numbers of causalities. After the victory many Christian commanders were taken prisoner, including Guy de Lusignan, the King of Jerusalem and Reginald, a French general. Historians are agreed that Reginald committed several breaches of trust against Salahuddin Ayyubi.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes Reginald as "one of the leading figures of the crusades between 1147 and 1187, whose reckless policy in raiding Muslim Caravans during periods of truce led to the virtual destruction of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and the loss of most of its territory." (VIII/480)

The Historian Ibn Shaddad (1144-1234) has recorded how, when Reginald treacherously attacked a Muslim caravan in this way, his victims pleaded with him to leave them for the sake of God, as he was going against the truce arrived at between him and the Muslims. His only answer was a taunt: "Ask your Muhammad to save you! When news of this attack reached Salahuddin Ayyubi, he vowed that when God granted him victory over Reginald, he would kill him with his own hands. (*Al-Nawadir Al-Sultania*, p. 127)

When, after the victory, Reginald was brought before Salahuddin as a prisoner, the latter reminded him of all his acts of treason, in particular, his looting of a group of pilgrims, his denial mercy and his taunt to them to call on their Muhammad to save them. Salahuddin then drew his sword and slew him, saying, "I have taken revenge on behalf of Mohammad."

The King of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan, shuddered at the swiftness of Reginald's execution, for he thought that his fate was to be the same. But Sultan Salahuddin immediately set his mind at rest by saying. "It is not for kings to kill kings. So far as this man (Reginald) was concerned, he came to the end that he did because he had several times been found guilty of treason." (*Ibn Shaddad, AL-Nawadir Al-Sultania*, p.64.)

Sultan Salahuddin summarily executed a proven traitor, but refrained from having a man who, although his enemy, had never had the perversity to commit a breach of trust.

This is Islamic Valour. The truly brave Muslim is one who knows how to make peace as well as war; who has the courage to forgive as well as punish; who knows when to take up arms and when to sheath his sword.

18 April 1990

Win or Lose – It Makes No Difference

Sugar Ray Robinson, an American boxer, was considered the greatest boxer of his time. In his 25 year career he fought in 201 contests of which he won 174. Robinson so excelled in boxing that even the world champion, Mohammad Ali acknowledged his greatness. When Robinson died on April 14, 1989, in Los Angeles at the age of 67, Mohammad Ali told Reuter's representative on the telephone that "Robinson was the greatest fighter of all time. He's the only one who was better than me. I'll miss him."

Robinson was a heart-patient and had to spend the last years of his life confined to an armchair. The saddest part was that he could not even reminisce about his feats in the ring, for all his memories of his days of glory were taken away from him by Alzheimer's disease. There was very little of the past that he could remember at all.

It is quite possible that many of the people who spend their lives struggling towards greatness will suffer the same fate. When old age, disease, or an accident destroys the memory, it also destroys all those great sacrifices, great moments and great triumphs. It reduces all efforts and their fruits to less than nothing, for it is only in the memory that they can continue to exist. Then there is no difference between greatness and significance. There is no difference between receiving honours or not receiving them. In the last analysis, there is no difference between winning and losing, profit and loss.

Nature and Science Speak About God

I

The greatest evidence of God before us is His creation. Nature itself and our study of nature, both proclaim the fact that there is one God who, in the infinity of His wisdom, has created and continues to sustain this universe. By ignoring or rejecting this truth, we plunge ourselves into an abyss of murky incomprehension and its attendant evils.

The very existence of the universe, with its superb organization and immeasurable meaningfulness, is inexplicable except as having been brought into existence by a Creator – a Being with an infinite intelligence – rather than by a blind force.

Among the philosophers of our time, there is a group, perhaps fortunately a small one, which doubts the very existence of every thing, no matter what it may be. It asserts that there exists neither man nor universe. In its nihilism, it likewise rejects the existence of God, even as a remote possibility.

As far as this particular brand of agnosticism is concerned, this may be a philosophical point worth considering purely as an abstract exercise in logic, but it is in no way connected with reality. When we think, the very act of thinking gives evidence of our existence. The great French philosopher and mathematician, Descartes, (1596-1660) founded his philosophy on the precept: "I think, therefore, I am."* ("Je pense, donc je suis.") And from this point, he went on to deduce the existence of God. Our sensory perceptions too give us clear indications of the external existence of material things. If, for example, while walking along the road, we are hit by a stone, we feel pain. This experience establishes that, apart from us and outside of us, there exists a world having its own separate identity.

In fact, our minds, through our senses, perceive innumerable objects and register countless sensations and impressions every moment of our waking existence. These acts of cognition are personal experiences which continually reinforce the concept of the world having its own existence. Now, if the philosophical inclinations of a particular individual make him sceptical about the existence of the universe, this is an exceptional case, bearing no relation to the experiences of millions of human beings. It is simply that such an individual is so engrossed in his own private predilections that he has become deaf and blind to common realities. For the sake of argument, he would have us concede his point, but this would in no way imply that God did not exist. The absurdity of arguments against the existence of commonly accepted things is so patent as to be hardly worth comment. And quite apart from being incomprehensible to the common man, they could never gain credence in the world of learning.

Outside the nihilist group, the existence of the universe is accepted as a reality: the moment we admit its existence, we find belief in God inescapable, because the notion of creation having arisen spontaneously

out of nothing is quite inconceivable. When everything big or small, has a cause, how can it be believed that such a vast universe has come into existence on its own, and that it has no Creator? In his autobiography, John Stuart Mill, observed that his father had impressed upon him from the first, that the manner in which the world came into existence was a subject on which nothing was known: that the question "Who made me?" cannot be answered, because we have no experience or authentic information from which to answer it, and that any answer only throws the difficulty a step further back, since the question immediately presents itself, "Who made God?"¹

This is an old argument much relied upon by atheists, its implication being that if we do accept that there is a Creator of the universe, we shall be compelled to accept this Creator as being eternal. And when God has to be regarded as eternal, why should not the universe itself be regarded as eternal instead? Although such a conclusion is absolutely meaningless – because no such attribute of the universe has come to light so far to justify the conclusion that the universe has come into existence of its own accord – up till the nineteenth century, this misleading argument of the atheists was regarded as the most attractive one. But now, with the discovery of the second law of the thermodynamics, this argument has lost its validity. Thermodynamics is a branch of science which deals with energy transformation. In particular, it shows the quantitative relations between heat and other forms of energy. The importance of conservation in relation to energy, is expressed in the first law of thermodynamics.

The Law of Entropy is the second law of thermodynamics. To understand it, let us take the example of a metallic bar which has been heated at one end but left cold at the other. Heat will instantly begin to flow from the hot end along the length of the bar to the cold end, and will continue to do so until the temperature of the whole bar becomes uniform. The flow of heat will always be in one direction, i.e. from warmer to colder bodies and this flow will never pass spontaneously in the opposite direction, or even haphazardly in just any direction. Other examples of such uniform and non-reversible processes abound in the physical world. For instance, gas always flows towards a vacuum or moves from a point of higher pressure towards that of a lower pressure till its pressure becomes uniform. It is impossible for any gas to flow in the reverse direction. Such observations provide the basis for the second law of thermodynamics. This law may be stated as follows:

All natural or spontaneous processes occurring without the intervention of an external agency are irreversible. The process of one-way movement goes on till a state of equilibrium is reached. On the relevance of these laws to creation, Edward Luther Kessel, an American zoologist, writes:

Science clearly shows that the universe could not have existed from all eternity. The law of entropy states that there is a continuous flow of heat from warmer to colder bodies, and that this flow cannot be reversed to pass spontaneously in the opposite direction. Entropy is the ratio of unavailable to available energy, so that it may be said that the entropy of the universe is always increasing. Therefore the universe is headed for a time when the temperature will be universally uniform and there will be no more useful energy.

1. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 30.

"Consequently there will be no more chemical and physical processes, and life itself will cease to exist. But because life is still going on, and chemical and physical processes are still in progress, it is evident that our universe could not have existed from eternity, else it would have long since run out of useful energy and ground to a halt. Therefore, quite unintentionally, science proves that our universe had a beginning. And in so doing it proves the reality of God, for whatever had a beginning did not begin of itself but demands a Prime Mover, a Creator, a God."¹

James Jeans has expressed the same view:

"The more orthodox scientific view is that the entropy of the universe must forever increase to its final maximum value. It has not yet reached this: we should not be thinking about it if it had. It is still increasing rapidly, and so must have had a beginning; there must have been what we may describe as a 'creation' at a time not infinitely remote."²

There is much physical evidence of this type to prove that the universe has not always existed. On the contrary, its lifespan is limited. According to astronomy, the universe is in a state of continuous expansion outwards from the centre of its origin. All of the galaxies and celestial bodies are observably moving away from one another at enormous speeds. This phenomenon can be satisfactorily explained if we presume an initial point of time when all these constituents were an integrated whole, and the release of energy and the process of movement were subsequent developments.

On the basis of different observations of a similar type, it is generally held that the universe originated about 5 billion years ago. In theory, the entire universe was formed by an extraordinary explosion from a state of high density and high temperature. This has come to be known as the 'big-bang' theory. To accept that the universe has a limited life-span, and at the same time to deny its having an originator is like accepting that the Taj Mahal has not existed for all eternity, (it having been built some time in the middle of seventeenth century) while denying the existence of an architect or builder, and asserting, on the contrary, that it simply mushroomed all by itself on a particular date.

Studies in astronomy show that the number of stars in the sky is as numerous as all of the sand grains on all the seashores of our planet, many of the stars being vastly greater in size than our earth, some even being of such enormous girth that they could accommodate lakhs of earths inside them and still have room to spare. A few of them are even big enough to contain millions and millions of earths. The universe is so vast that an aeroplane flying at the greatest speed imaginable, i.e. at the speed of light, (one lakh and eighty six miles per second) would take about ten billion years to complete just a single trip around the whole universe. Even with such a huge circumference, this universe is not static, but is expanding every moment in all directions. So rapid is this expansion that, according to an estimate by Eddington,* (Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington (1882-1944), noted British physicist and astronomer.) every one thousand three hundred million years, all the distances in this universe are doubled. This means that even our imaginary aeroplane travelling at the speed of light would not ever be able to fly all the way around the universe, because it would never be able to catch up with this unending expansion. This

estimation of the vastness of the universe is based on Einstein's theory of relativity. But this is just a mathematician's guess. To tell the truth, man has yet to comprehend the vastness of the universe.

To be continued

1. (*Evidence of God*, pp.50-51.)
2. (*The Mysterious Universe*, p. 133.)